

In Search of the Greater IO Perspective

Welcome to the first-ever Special Edition of *IO Sphere*. It's our privilege to bring you, the greater information operations community, something extra for 2008. You may ask why a quarterly journal would chose to field an "out of sequence" product? The simplest answer is that we're offering something different enough to warrant a little extra attention. On the facing page you'll read how representatives from twelve countries produced something extraordinary, and that the J7 "futures division" felt you might find worth a closer look.

As representatives of IO practices and philosophies, the Joint Information Operations Warfare Command, guided by our US Strategic Command headquarters, looks at a range of ways to assist DOD and Coalition influence planners. This means we're listening to many voices and world views, across a wide range of cultural and historic perspectives. Understanding the complexities of modern influence operations requires both the broadest range of knowledge, and the most granular detail we can determine. Sourcing such formidable needs can be tough, yet sometimes all we need to do is ask. Joint and Service partners are fortunate to have long-standing relationships with a number of graduate, post-graduate and professional institutions—especially those who host sizable international faculty, advisors and students. Similarly, diplomats and military members on the ground in current campaigns are developing increasingly greater regional expertise. Combined with booming open source database efforts, the IO community can access knowledge, experience and lessons learned from almost anywhere. Notably, this means an even greater number of voices.

The international circulation of this journal continues to grow, especially among NATO countries, as do article and editorial contributions by authors outside the US. This is welcome on many levels: helping build a professional community; helping educate new and developing IO staffs;



and sharing views from outside traditional North American boundaries. Sometimes critical flashes of insight come from those farthest from the normal expert's chair, in the same way history enthusiasts may find the most interesting observations from non-traditional sources. A writer from south Asia may provide a fresh perspective on the battlefields of the US Civil War, while a west African soldier may give a US IO planner cause for reflection. Some in the IO community would say that given DOD's reputation as people of action, a time for reflection is the hardest thing to determine.

Relationships change, sometimes very rapidly, and may enhance or harm IO planners' abilities. Yet in the strategic communications business, with more frequent talk of dialog—even among traditional adversaries—opportunities are growing. Sometimes an invitation is the toughest step. The Foreign Military Studies Office and their international guests took up one such offer, and we hope you'll find the results both valuable and enjoyable.



-- Col J.R. Roberts, USAF
Executive Editor

-- Mr. John W. Whisenhunt
Editor